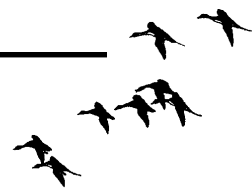


Nature's Call

An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD--Fall 1998



Quack, Quack We're Back!

Have you noticed that the days seem to be getting shorter, and it isn't as warm as it was last summer? Maybe you have been to the mountains and have seen some of the leaves on the trees are changing color. Those are all signs that autumn is here.

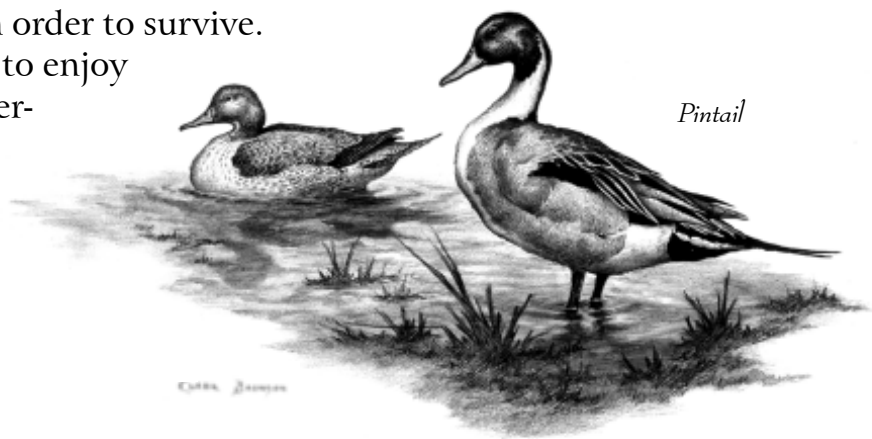
There is another sign of autumn that is happening outside right now. Ducks, geese, swans and other birds are coming back to Utah. They have been away in the north for the summer. Now they are flying back to the south to spend the winter. As these great birds, known as waterfowl, make their long trip between their nesting habitats in the north and their wintering habitats in the south, many of them will pass right through Utah.

Ducks are usually the first waterfowl to get to Utah on their annual migration. As we look at the ponds and marshes, we are likely to see two different kinds of ducks. There are brightly colored dabbling ducks. We also call these ducks puddle ducks. There are many different kinds of puddle ducks. Mallards, teal, pintails and gadwalls are all puddle ducks. We can tell puddle ducks by the way the tip up in the water to feed on plants and insects. Also, when they take off from the water, they jump straight into the air!

Canvasbacks, scaup and ruddy ducks are examples of the diving ducks. These ducks can dive and swim around under the surface of the water looking for food. When they take off, they run across the surface of the water to get enough speed to fly.

Many geese will come through Utah this fall too. We will see black and white Canada geese, white snow geese, and others. Geese have longer necks than ducks, and usually fly in a large "V" formation. This helps them save energy on their long flights. One of the most beautiful waterfowl to come to Utah is the swan. These large birds have all white feathers and a black bill. For a long time it looked like swans would become extinct. Now it looks like they are doing quite well.

All these waterfowl need wetlands in order to survive. Without wetlands, we won't be able to enjoy the sights and sounds of these wonderful birds. We hope you will enjoy learning about Utah's Wonderful Waterfowl and their habitats in this issue of Nature's Call.

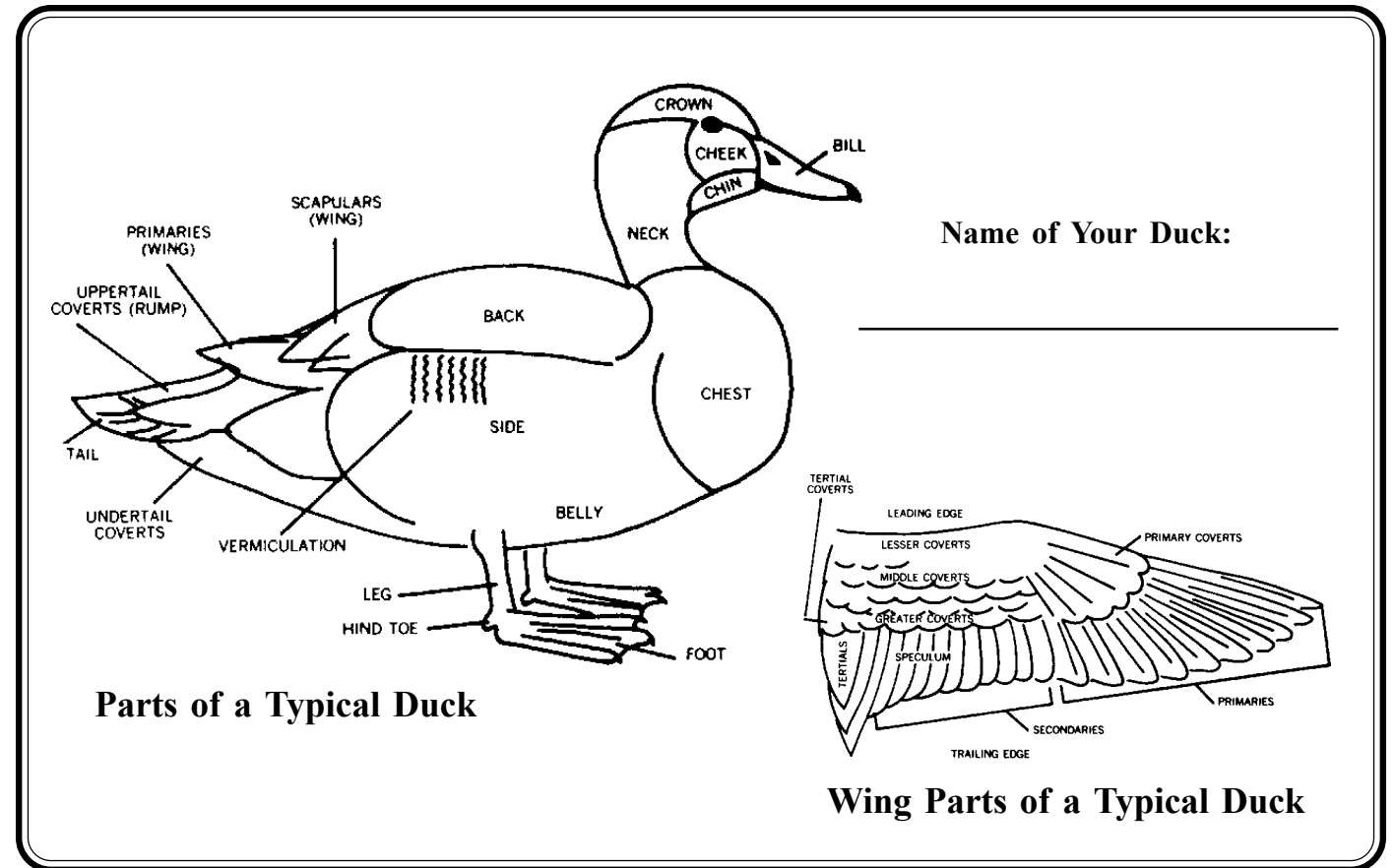


WILD Waterfowl!

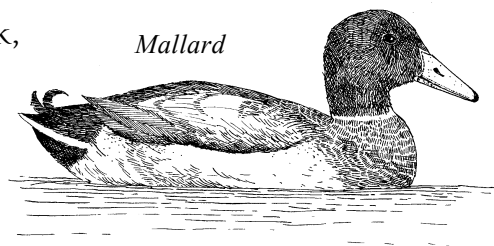
Many different types of ducks, geese and swans can be found in Utah's wetland areas. They come in all shapes, sizes and colors. It's a good thing that they do, because that way people can tell which one is which. To tell different species apart, birders, people who watch birds, often first use colors of different body parts, such as the head, the bill and the body to identify them. Many waterfowl species are even named after the color of some of their parts.

Using patterns of color is an especially useful trick for identifying duck species in particular. This is because the male duck, or drake, is usually very brightly colored. Hens, female ducks, on the other hand, are drab colored, but can be identified by the drake with which they are paired. Both though, often have a distinctly colored place on the tops of their wings called a "speculum," that only shows when they're flying, or maybe stretching their wings.

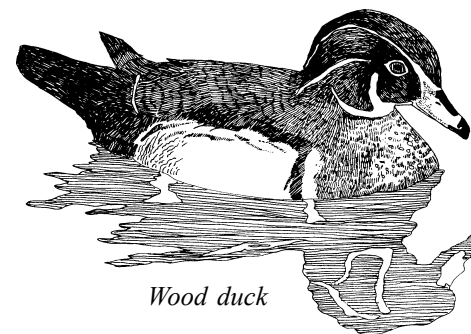
To learn more about identifying the different ducks that you may see, read the information about some of Utah's different ducks below, and study the diagram showing the body parts of a typical duck in the box to the right. Also look at some colored pictures of ducks that your teacher may have. When you have learned about some of the ducks in Utah, color the duck in the box to the right with a variety of colors. After you have colored your duck, give it a name reflecting the colors it has!



The **mallard**, is one of the most common ducks that you can see on any marsh. It is easily recognized by its bright green head and neck, and rust-colored chest, separated by a white collar. It also has yellow or orange feet, a yellow bill, a shiny blue speculum, and upturned tail feathers that form a curl. Mallards are a type of "puddle" duck. When they tip to feed, all you'll see is their white bellies and black undertail feathers bobbing on the surface.



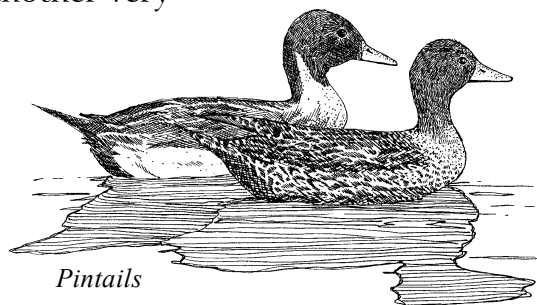
Mallard



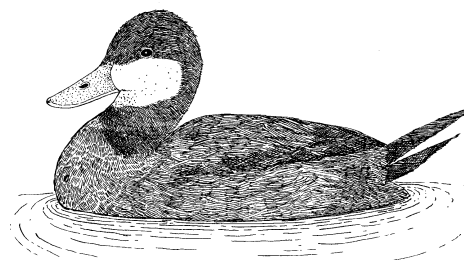
Wood duck

Wood ducks are probably the most uniquely colored ducks sporting almost every color of the rainbow. Their heads have a crest, colored green with white stripes, their eyes are red, and the bill is red with a white edge on top and a black tip. Moving down, their brown-colored chests are separated from the head and tan sides by bold white and black stripes. The tail, wings and back are dark, black-green with iridescent blue areas. They are not very common in Utah so you will need to look at a color picture to fill in the rest of the details.

The **pintail** is another very common duck in Utah. It can be identified by its chocolate-colored head with white neck and chest feathers that extend upward along the back of the head, forming a stripe. Its name though, comes from another very distinctive feature, an especially long, pointed black-colored tail. It has a green speculum. Since it is a relatively slender duck, it can fly rapidly through the sky.



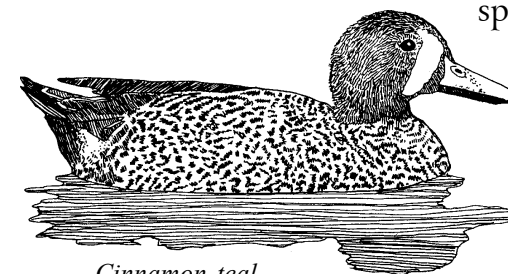
Pintails



Ruddy duck

The **ruddy duck** is a very strangely colored duck. Believe it or not, it has a bright blue bill! It also has a black crown, snowy white cheek patches, a rusty-colored body, and black wing and tail feathers. Its tail feathers point sharply upward like a stiff fan, and so they are sometimes called "stiff-tails". They are small-sized ducks that often dive instead of fly when approached by danger.

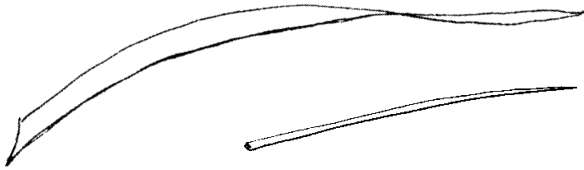
Some other ducks named after features that are a particular color include: the blue-winged teal and the green-winged teal, which have a blue-colored speculum and a green-colored



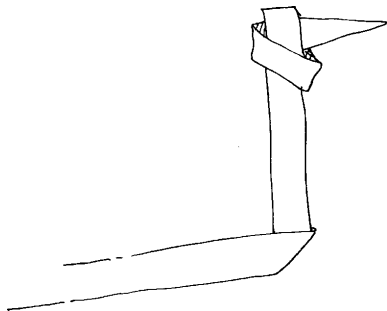
Cinnamon teal

speculum respectively; the cinnamon teal, which has cinnamon-colored feathers covering its head, chest and sides; and the redhead, with a red head and neck offset by a black chest, white belly and greyish back.

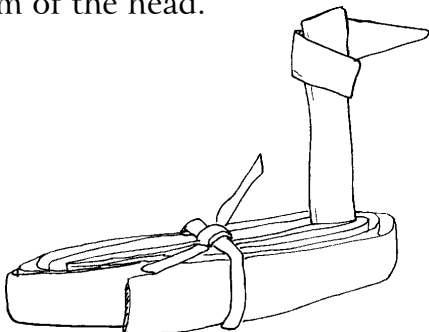
All of you have probably heard of rubber ducks before. By a pond though, there's not usually any rubber, but there are lots of cattails. So, instead of making a rubber duck, you can make a cattail duck! "Cattail ducks?", you may ask. Yes, cattail ducks. You see, cattails have an interesting feature. Their stems are made up of hollow air pockets, and so they will float on water. Because of this, they can be used to make floating ducks. Just follow the directions below to make your own cattail duck!



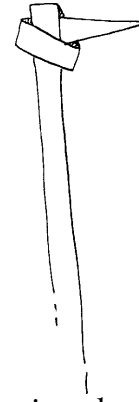
Step 1: Cut a long cattail leaf blade off from its main stalk. Cut a piece about three feet long. Also cut a piece of sedge, a grass-like, round-stemmed plant usually growing along the edge of a pond or marsh. This piece should be about one foot long.



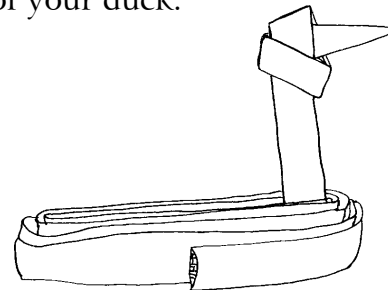
Step 3: Create the body by folding the cattail blade to the back, so it points in the direction opposite of the bill. Begin the fold about two to three inches from the bottom of the head.



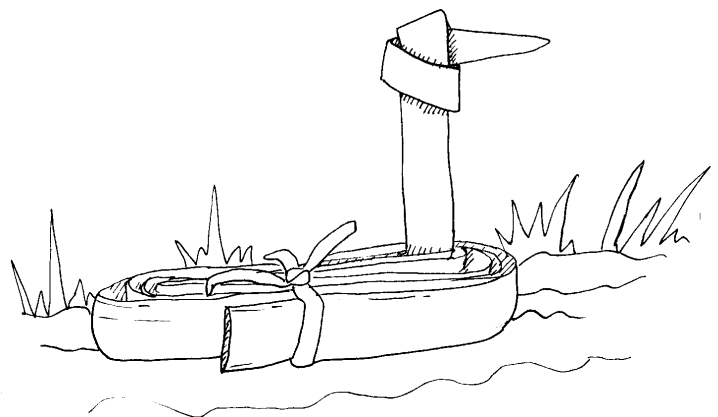
Step 5: Hold the body firmly, and then use the piece of sedge to tie the body together. Tie the sedge around the middle of the duck's body with a square knot on top. Then, cut off the extra left on the ends of the piece of sedge.



Step 2: Hold the pointed end of the cattail blade and fold it around and under like tying a loop for a knot. This will create the head and bill of your duck.



Step 4: Leave about three inches of cattail blade for the body and then begin wrapping the rest of the cattail around that part until you run out of cattail. You can add another blade if you want to make the body bigger.



Step 6: Float your duck on a calm, quiet pool at the edge of the pond.